

# The Classical Bulletin

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## Symbolism in the Shield of Achilles

When we speak of tone in literature we generally mean by that the author's attitude toward his subject and his audience. He is, for example, hostile or sympathetic. The author indicates this attitude by the manner of treating his material. It is a very important element of any work of literature, and essential to understanding and appreciating fully a particular work.

In applying this element of criticism to the first great epic poem of Western literature, Homer's *Ilias*, we are immediately confronted with an apparent problem. Almost the entire action in the *Ilias* is centered around war; from beginning to end, the epic is filled with battle scenes. If war, then, plays such a major role in the epic and is the foundation and framework for the thematic development of the Wrath of Achilles, it would seem important to discover, if we can, the attitude which Homer takes towards war in the *Ilias*.

There are, to be sure, many windows into the poet's mind on this question: there are his own comments and reflections after the description of a battle, or the views which his characters express on the effects of war. I would like to consider here, however, the possibility of Homer's attitude as being revealed through poetic symbolism. In a work such as the *Ilias* where the theme is so complex, Homer's symbolism, if we understand that to mean one thing standing as a meaningful sign for another, unearths entirely new meaning and significance for us.

### Importance of the Shield of Achilles

The major, most comprehensive symbol working in the epic to shed some light on the problem of attitude is, I feel, the Shield of Achilles in Book 18. The symbolic richness of the shield has perhaps not been fully realized by some of the older commentators, like Monro, who remarks:

... The book ends with a digression that takes our thoughts wholly away from the story of the *Iliad*. The divine pictures with which Hephaestus adorns the shield of Achilles do not illustrate anything in the context in which they are placed, and indeed have no relation to history or legend.<sup>1</sup>

If this is true, and the shield is an inorganic digression with no symbolic meaning in its context, then it would appear to be a serious artistic flaw on Homer's part. A more recent critic, however, Werner Jaeger, is able to see the shield as an organic vehicle of meaning:

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... That deep sense of the harmony between man and nature, which inspires the description of Achilles' shield, is dominant in Homer's conception of the world.<sup>2</sup>

Another contemporary scholar, E. M. W. Tillyard, interprets the shield also as an expression of Homer's belief that "the works of peace are good and the sacking of cities is terrible."<sup>3</sup> Tillyard, it is true, avoids the actual term "symbol," but the concept nevertheless seems to be at the heart of what he says.

### Scenes on the Shield

But let us look closer at the shield. Its history is well known. It was made by the god, Hephaestus, at the request of Thetis to replace the one her son, Achilles, had loaned to Patroclus. The shield itself is a series of highly artistic scenes and pictures intended to present a panorama of civilization and mankind in all its various activities. It is Homer's ideal view of the world; and here precisely lies the symbolic significance of the shield: this view is essentially one of harmony and peace.

The first scene on the shield is a striking contrast between two cities: one at peace, the other at war. The delineation of the two cities plainly indicates Homer's preference. The peaceful city (490-508) is a place of joy and happiness, an atmosphere created by the imagery of marriages, banquets, brides, dancing, the flute and lyre. Even the case of litigation is being settled peacefully in court without any bloodshed. The second city (509-540) is a radical contrast. Ares is present (516), armies are drawn up, and a pitched battle ensues. Here again the imagery exposes the poet's tone and attitude toward strife, confusion, the spirit of death, blood.

I might note that Ares may be a much more significant figure here than we would at first realize. Classical writers often employ the gods as symbols of their own special powers, as, for example, Euripides' use of Aphrodite to symbolize passionate love (*Medea* 629-632), or Horace's use of Bacchus to represent the delights of wine (*Carm.* 1.18). Now in the *Iliad*, the character of Ares is clearly a symbol of war and the love of war. With this in mind, the way in which other characters in the *Iliad* react to Ares takes on new meaning. It tells something about Homer's own reaction to war. The most enlightening reaction is voiced in Book 5 (888-898), when Zeus utters a scathing denunciation of Ares for all he symbolizes: war and fighting. The key lines are 890-891: "You, of all the gods on Olympus, are the most hateful in my eyes. For strife and wars and battles are always dear to you." Ares is called the most hated of all the gods precisely because of his love of war. Through this judgment of Zeus, the supreme god of Olympus, Homer seems to be proposing his own judgment of war: that it is something evil.<sup>4</sup> This seems to be the point which E. V. Rieu is making in the introduction to his translation of the *Iliad*:

... It is possible that the reason why he persistently degrades and ridicules Ares in a poem which is more concerned with battle, is that the *Iliad* was written not to glorify war (though it admits its fascination) but to emphasize its tragic futility.<sup>5</sup>

#### Five Further Scenes

The other five scenes on the shield are predominantly peaceful and joyous, free from all suggestion of strife. Homer includes all the seasons of the year in the pictures, harmoniously balancing each other off: Spring ploughing (541-549), Summer reaping (550-560), Autumn in the vineyard (561-572), Winter shepherding (573-589). His final picture is the dancing where the simple delights of music and the lyre abound.

The only exception to the tone of this portrait is the brief glimpse of the two lions which viciously devour one of the bulls from the herd. The lion is a very frequent and fascinating image all through the *Iliad*. Like Blake's *Tiger* and Balzac's *Panther* (*A Passion in the Desert*), it has an aura of power and mystery about it. Blake's tiger, for example, is somehow strange and preternatural. In its artistic framework, it comes to symbolize all the power, pride, and guilt of the flesh (the carnal tendencies in man). Homer's lion, consciously or subconsciously, fulfills a similar function in the *Iliad*. As a thematic image, it seems to be symbolic not only of evil in general, but more particularly of the brute, bestial qualities in man which destroy peace and harmony in the universe. This identification of the lion with the irrational and animal instincts in man is seen more pointedly in a scene from Book 24. Dur-

ing a debate among the gods on the question of loyalty to Achilles or the dead Hector, Apollo compares Achilles to a lion in his act of murder:

... Immortals, you choose rather to extend your aid to the destructive Achilles, who possesses a heart devoid of all feeling and a will which is implacable. He acts like a savage lion, which, to get some dinner, gives vent to its great strength and boldness and leaps upon men's flocks. Achilles, like that lion, has murdered pity (39-44).

The lion, then, symbolizes war itself and all the brute force and savage destruction that war inflicts upon men. The grim picture which Homer paints of the lion on the shield of Achilles is intended to be a strong contrast to his ideal vision of peace.

The shield of Achilles is a series of cameos working organically to communicate a sense of harmony while realistically admitting the evil present in the world. On an even larger plane, the shield is a miniature of the whole epic, for there are two levels of action in the *Iliad*—war and peace—and the two are constantly interweaving. War and the glory and honor which at times accompany it are the more evident, since they are the surface level. But beneath this level, Homer has structured a more subtle theme: abhorrence of war and desire for peace.

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#### NOTES

1 Homer, *The Iliad*, ed. D. B. Monro (Oxford), Notes to the text, 339. 2 Werner Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (Oxford 1954) I 50. 3 E. M. W. Tillyard, *The English Epic and Its Background* (London 1954) 26. 4 Homer more directly expresses his attitude toward Ares in the epithets which he attaches to him in Book 5: as at lines 31, 455, 518, 717, 831. 5 Homer, *The Iliad*, tr. E. V. Rieu (Penguin 1950) xviii.

#### My Dreams Are of a Field Afar (Latinized)

My dreams are of a field afar  
And blood and smoke and shot.  
There in their graves my comrades are,  
In my grave I am not.

I too was taught the trade of man  
And spelt the lesson plain;  
But they, when I forgot and ran,  
Remembered and remain.

—A. E. Housman

Campum remotum telaque sanguinem  
Fumosque cerno quando oculi mei  
Quiete clausi. Dum in sepulchro  
Compositi socii, ipse vivo.

Mortalium artes erudior quoque  
Et disciplinas edidici bene.  
Cum oblitus omnes desero, illi  
Iam memores remanent per annos.

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### Cicero's Sense of Humor (*De Or. and Att.*)

My purpose is twofold: (1) to classify humor in Cicero's letters to Atticus and Quintus under the types which Cicero described and illustrated in the *De Oratore*, comparing them with examples given in that treatise; and (2) by so doing to reach a conclusion about the quality of the humor in Cicero's letters. Since many of the illustrations in the *De Oratore* are less well known than they deserve to be, the recollection of these may also be welcome.

In the *De Oratore* Cicero is able to reach conclusions regarding the use of laughter, though like other writers on humor, both ancient and modern, he did not understand its nature.<sup>1</sup> Though writing on oratory, he points out that what he has to say applies equally well to less formal interchanges. Since the treatise is in the form of an Aristotelian dialogue, the arrangement is informal, and perhaps intentionally repetitious.<sup>2</sup> The two divisions are humor that depends on words (*in verbis*) and that which depends on things (*in re*). The joke that remains witty in whatever words it is told has its basis in fact; that which loses its point when one changes the words owes its humor to the language. In that which depends on words, there is no distinction between its use in serious discourse and that in humor. The material is different, but the methods are the same. Humor in words arouses admiration rather than laughter, unless it is combined with another type of humor, such as the unexpected. The classes of verbal humor are (1) *ambigua* (250-256);<sup>3</sup> (2) *paronomasia* (256-257); (3) quotation of verses or proverbs (257-258); (4) words taken literally (259-260); (5) "allegory" (*ex immutata oratione*), metaphor, and ironical inversion of verbal meanings (261-262); and (6) antithetical expressions (263).

Cicero also recognized the distinction between the continuous vein of humor: *cavillatio* or *facetiae*, used by the *facetus* (as in narrative) and *dicacitas*: witty attacks, used by the *dicax*. This roughly corresponds to our own distinction between wit and humor. Obviously, a continuous vein of humor would be possible only *in re*, and usually in a passage of considerable length: *narratio*. As does the *Tractatus Coislinianus*,<sup>4</sup> Cicero's summary of the few main classes (*pauca genera*—289) into which humor *in re* should be divided includes (1) the unexpected (281-285); (2) the debasing of personalities through caricature (266), or the imitating of a baser person (289); and (3) *dissimulatio*: dissembling or irony (289; 269-280). With the possible exception of similitude or comparison (265), hyperbole and its opposite, understatement (267), *minuendi aut augendi causa*, the other types of humor *in re* can be subordinated to these categories.

I shall begin, as Cicero does in his final arrangement, with humor *in verbis*, admired by the Romans

since the earliest period of Latin literature. Roman comedy, particularly the plays of Plautus, abounds in it,<sup>5</sup> and it is obvious that it was appreciated in court, too; however much it may have been to his taste—and the letters to Atticus are proof that it was—Cicero would hardly have persisted in punning were it contrary to the interest of his clients. Like Shakespeare he was probably catering to the taste of his audience as well as to his own, and one who listens to radio and television may conclude that puns have come back into favor today.

#### Humor "in Verbis"

To proceed with my analysis of the *genera in verbis*: (1) *ambigua*: (250-256): *Ex ambiguo dicta vel argutissima putantur*; *ambigua* are clever, but seldom raise laughter unless they fall also into another category of the laughable. Cicero says also that this type is most delightful when a word is snatched from an antagonist and used to hurl a shaft at the assailant himself, as when Philippus inquired of Catulus: "What are you laughing at, Mr. Puppy?" (this being the meaning of *catulus*), and he answered: "I see a thief" (220, 256).

Many *ambigua* are plays on proper names<sup>6</sup> and are improved, according to Cicero's theory, because they are also *in re*, since they involve the debasing of personages. Cicero was no respecter of position. Pompey, Caesar, and Brutus all came in for their share. Pompey's honorary cognomen was ridiculed in the line: *Nostra miseria tu es magnus* (*Att.* 2.19.3).<sup>7</sup> A statue of Caesar with the inscription *Deo Invicto* was erected in the temple of Quirinus, near the house of Atticus, on the Quirinal Hill. There was also on the same hill a temple to *Salus*. "I see your house will go up in value, now that you have Caesar for a neighbor," writes Cicero to Atticus in *Att.* 12.45. "Well, I'd rather have him sharing the honors of Quirinus than of Safety" (*Att.* 12.45). Romulus was torn to pieces just before he was acknowledged as a god. In *Att.* 13.28.3, Cicero again refers to Caesar as "the one of the procession, the messmate of Quirinus," when he explains to Atticus that he has given up the idea of trying to curry favor with any moderate letter such as he could write: *Quid? tu hunc de pompa, Quirini contubernalem, his nostris moderatis epistulis laetaturum putas?* At the *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris* two months later, the statue of Caesar was carried among the gods beside that of Victory. "How well the people acted in not applauding Victory on account of the bad company she was in!" *Att.* 13.40.1<sup>8</sup> has an additional element of the unexpected (*praeter expectationem*) and *dissimulatio*: "Does Brutus say that Caesar is going to join the *boni*? Where will he find them unless he hangs himself?"

Brutus' name was of course irresistible: *Culpa Brutorum? Minime illorum, sed aliorum "brutorum"*

qui se cautos et sapientis putant (Att. 14.14.2), and combined with Lepidus in the double wordplay of the Vedius incident (Att. 6.1.25). This, and the play on Rex the name, and rex the title, are discussed under *narratio*. Att. 2.7.3 involves wordplay on the *vigintiviri*: "though Clodius was once the only (*unus*) man in Caesar's house, now he has not even a place among the twenty!" All these are well known.

But one of the cleverest is in Att. 12.6.2, unique in being 'in' *re*, though 'on' *dicto*: Starting with mimicry of the abrupt and elliptical style of the rhetorician Hegesias, Cicero pretended to be annoyed that Atticus had Tyrannio read his latest book to him without waiting for the presence of Cicero: *Ain tu? verum hoc fuit? sine me? At ego quotiens, cum essem otiosus, sine te tamen nolui? Quo modo hoc lues?* If one accepts the explanation that this was a treatise on accents, there is wordplay in the query as to what there was in that *acute and grave* treatise that applied to the *ultimate principle* of conduct.<sup>9</sup>

#### Effect of Paronomasia

(2) *Paronomasia*: (256-257): *Alterum genus est, quod habet parvam verbi immutationem, quod in littera positum Graeci vocant, παρονομασίαν, ut "Nobiliorum, mobiliorem" Cato; aut, ut idem, cum cuidam dixisset: "Eamus deambulatum," "Quid opus fuit DE?" "Immo vero," inquit; "Quid opus fuit TE?"*

Famous are the following: Att. 13.46.1, where Pollex brought no information. Therefore Pollex was true to his name: Pollex was no index. Att. 1.13.2 is surely *debasing* to M. Pupius Piso, the consul of 61 B.C. In this Cicero really outdid himself with a double wordplay, the last particularly clever, and well rendered by Professor Tyrrell:<sup>10</sup> "The consul is pettish and perverse, a dealer in that sort of bitter sarcasm that always raises a laugh, though there be no real wit in the words. He makes people laugh, not by the force of his expression, but by the expression of his face." *Consul autem ipse parvo animo et "pravo" tamen cavillator genere illo moroso quod etiam sine dicacitate ridetur, facie magis quam "facetiis" ridiculus.* There was also Favonius, who spoke so badly that he appeared when in Rhodes to have ground at the mills, rather than at the lessons of Molon: *Dixit ita ut Rhodi videretur "molis" potius quam "Moloni" operam dedisse* (Att. 2.1.9). And of the juror who tried Clodius "XXXI fuerunt quos fames magis quam fama commoverit" (Att. 1.16.5). In the same letter Clodius is referred to as Pulchellus, the diminutive of Pulcher. In Att. 6.9.2 and 7.1.1 there is a play on *φιλοτιμία* and Philotimus.<sup>11</sup>

Att. 10.11.5 is somewhat obscure. Cicero had apparently offended Vettienus, a banker at Puteoli. Irritated because Vettienus addressed him as *proconsul* rather than *imperator*, Cicero addressed Vet-

tienus as *monetalis*. To explain the offense, Shuckburgh<sup>12</sup> suggests that Cicero gave him the title *triumvir monetalis* as though he coined money out of his debtors, or that there was a pun on *moneo*, as the dunning letter reminded Cicero of his obligations.

In Att. 14.12.3 the banker Vestorius was described as *remotum a dialectis in arithmetice satis exercitatum*, all the better because it also involves (6) antithetical expression. Probably Atticus, in reply, applied ironically to him and his friends the word *haeresis*: a sect, properly applicable to a school of philosophers. Thus the comment in Tyrrell and Purser<sup>13</sup> on Att. 14.14.1: *Itaque ioca tua plena facetiarum de haeresi Vestoriana . . . risisse me satis nihil est necesse rescribere.* Apparently Atticus was fond of puns. The only other joke of his that Cicero mentions was a play on *ὀπός*, fig-juice, *sucus*: "You mean the Oppii of Velia by your *succones* (blood-suckers)."<sup>14</sup> It took Cicero overnight to get this one (Att. 7.13.5; 13a.1).

#### Effective Use of Verses and Proverbs

(3) *Quotation of verses or proverbs*: (257-258): *Saepe etiam versus facite interponitur, vel ut est, vel paululum immutatus, aut aliqua pars versus.*

Most famous was the occasion when the lines spoken by Diphilus, the actor, were taken as an attack against Pompey: *Nostra miseria tu es magnus* (see *ambigua*—Att. 2.19.3), but there is also the tag line, suggested in Att. 4.9.1, with regard to Pompey's sincerity: "This, too, is by Phocylides."

258: *in hoc genus coniciuntur proverbia, ut illud Scipionis, cum Asellus omnes provincias stipendia merentem se peragrassasse gloriaretur, "Agas asellum," et cetera; (asellus means a "little ass").*

To us, Cicero's *De Varrone loquebamur: lupus in fabula!* is funnier because we know Varro. Att. 13.33a.1 continues: "Varro arrived at such an hour that I had to ask him to stay. But I didn't exactly tear his coat (to keep him from going). As for the others . . . I hardly touched their coats . . ., but they stayed, and it turned out very well." And so this becomes humor *in re*, as well as in *dicto*, involving *narratio*, *dissimulatio* (we would certainly call it *ironical*), the unexpected (*discrepantia*, or *praeter expectationem*), and certainly *debasing* the character of Varro and company: the perfect joke, it would seem!

One might almost say that the case of Tigellius has become proverbial, since Cicero expended three proverbs upon him. Cicero did not like him; in fact, he wrote to Atticus that it was good to have someone to hate, and not to act the slave to everyone (meaning Caesar) (Att. 13.49.2). Nonetheless, he would have undertaken the defense of Tigellius for the sake of the man's grandfather Phamea, had the date not conflicted with the trial of Sestius. The sentence is

usually completed in accordance with the letter to M. Fadius Gallus (*Fam.* 7.24.1) of about the same date): *Est bellum aliquem libenter odisse et quem ad modum "non omnibus dormire, ita non omnibus servire."* The allusion is to one Cippius, who pretended to be asleep so as not to see the indiscretions of his wife; but when a slave took advantage of the situation to try to steal some wine, the master called out: *Non omnibus dormio*. In the next letter (*Fam.* 7.25.1) Cicero teases Gallus about being afraid that unless we have Tigellius on our side we may have to laugh out of the wrong side of our mouths. "Sardinian laughter" was apparently proverbial, as were other bad qualities of the land and its people. Hence Cicero would dispose of the man by calling him *hominem pestilentiorum patria sua*, were he not already knocked down by the scazontic hammer of Calvus (*Fam.* 7.24.1). Tyrrell and Purser<sup>15</sup> cite the first line of Calvus' poem: *Sardi Tigelli putidum caput venit*—"For sale the Sardinian oaf." Cicero puts it more mildly: *Habes 'Sardos venales, alium alio nequiores'* (*Fam.* 7.24.2), using the form of a well-known proverb<sup>16</sup> and classing Phamea with his grandson, since Cicero's excuse was not accepted.

#### Effect of Words Taken Literally

(4) Words taken literally: (259-260): *Est etiam in verbo positum non insulsum genus ex eo, cum ad verbum, non ad sententiam rem accipere videre.*

I find no examples in the letters to Atticus, but the examples which Cicero gives in the *De Oratore* are so good that I should like to quote them. There was Crassus' reply to the man who asked him whether he would be a nuisance to him if he paid him a visit before daylight. "No, you won't be a nuisance (*molestus*)," said Crassus.—"Then you will give orders to be called?"—"No," answered Crassus, "I said you would not be a nuisance." Or Lucius Nasica's response to Cato the censor: *Cum ille: "Ex tui animi sententia tu uxorem habes?" "Non hercule," inquit, "ex mei animi sententia."* Sutton translates this: "Are you satisfied that you are a married man?" "Married for certain, but not to my entire satisfaction!" Cicero concludes with the warning: *Haec aut frigida sunt, aut tum salsa, cum aliud est expectatum. Natura enim nos, ut ante dixi, noster delectat error: ex quo, cum quasi decepti sumus expectatione, ridemus.* This is an excellent statement of the theory that laughter is often caused by deceived expectations (the disappointment theory).

#### Allegory and Like Figures

(5) Allegory, metaphor, and ironical inversion of verbal meanings (261-262): *In verbis etiam illa sunt, quae aut ex immutata oratione ducuntur aut ex unius verbi translatione, aut ex inversione verborum.*

Cicero's example of figurative use of a word (*ex translatione*), which he gives in the *De Oratore* involves the word *turmales*; when the Corinthians were promising Scipio the Elder a statue in the place where there were those of the other commanders, he told them that he had no liking for "statues in troops." The most deadly example from the letters is the line in which Cicero complained to Atticus (*Att.* 18.1): *Metellus non homo sed litus atque aer et solitudo mera*. If Cicero had wanted to excuse Clodia he could not have done better. Metellus' character is certainly debased, and there is also the element of surprise. In *Att.* 7.3.8 Cicero jokes about the splints (*serperastra*) he put on his staff to keep them straight, and in *Att.* 7.13a.2 Lucius Caesar was described as a broom with the binding off: *non hominem sed scopas solutas*. *QFr.* 2.10 ends with a double entendre: *Quamquam eius modi frigus impendebat ut summum periculum esset ne Appio suae aedes urerentur*. Cold weather will prevent meetings of the senate in fact, and metaphorically politics will also be cold and dull, and the consul's house will miss its usual throng of callers.<sup>17</sup>

*Invertuntur autem verba*: Cicero's example would be in poor taste today, because Crassus, the lawyer, was making fun of one who was *deformis*. "*Audiamus,*" inquit, "*pulchellum puerum.*" . . . *Cum esset arrisum, "Non potui mihi," inquit Lamia, "formam ipse fingere; ingenium potui."* Tum hic, "*Audiamus,*" inquit, "*disertum.*" Multo etiam arrisum est vehementius. In 239, where Cicero is discussing *moderatio in iocando*, he admits that there is good material for jesting in ugliness and physical blemishes: *deformitatis et corporis vitiorum satis bella materies*, but recommends the limits of good taste. Perhaps when Cicero refers to the murder of Clodius near Bovillae on the Via Appia as the "battle of Bovillae," he makes such an inversion of verbal meaning (*Att.* 5.13.1). Calling it the "battle of Leuctra" is even better, since this involves hyperbole and assimilation-towards-the-better (*Att.* 6.1.26).

#### Effectiveness of Antithesis

(6) Antithetical expressions (263): *Ornant igitur in primis orationem verba relate contrarie, quod idem genus saepe est etiam facetum.* Cicero has a good example, when he complains that Cato talks as if he were in the republic of Plato instead of in the sink of Romulus: *in Platonis Πολιτεία, non . . . in Romuli faece* (*Att.* 2.1.8).

#### Laughter Found "in Re"

We now come to Cicero's second *genus facetiarum*: laughter arising from things: *in re*, and his first point, *narratio* (*De Or.* 240, introductory). *Re, si quando quid, tanquam aliqua fabella narratur.* In

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## E D I T O R I A L

### Towards Uniformity in Proper Names

Some years ago a plan was proposed to end the international confusion in geographical names by worldwide agreement on the form of the name as natively employed. The program, which would have been of inestimable value for postal and many other purposes, did not succeed. We still have "Rom," "Roma," "Rome," for example. Recognizably, the wheels that would require readjusting are too many for quick alteration.

In the much more limited field of classical philology and archaeology, however, at the very least among those languages using the Roman alphabet, it would seem far more feasible to strive for uniformity. It seems a bit odd to encounter "Horaz" and "Horace," "Virgile" and "Virgil," and "Vergil" or ("Virgil"), "Sénèque" and "Seneca," "Lucaïn" and "Lucan," to cull but a few examples from but three of the prominent tongues of classical scholarship. There is here an unnecessary obstacle for the scholar, as well as for the publisher—the latter personage one of increasing importance in these days when the printing of American monographs and the like is rather frequently done in Europe, and when philological and archaeological periodicals are now so commonly multilingual in their articles in any one issue.

Further, there is no peril of offending national pride through the choice of any one modern language's usage rather than another's as the standard for proper names. The simple and obvious solution would be an agreement on the ancient Latin form for all authors and all titles, both Greek and Latin.

This sort of thing, of course, is in no wise without precedent or without previous proposal. Müller's *Handbuch*, interestingly, has "P. Terentius Afer" as

a title and as a running heading on alternate pages. The account of the comedian begins bravely: "Leben. P. Terentius Afer war geboren . . ." and then lapses into "Terenz." This is an intended and patterned plan. It could be readily altered. The *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, in its "Abbreviations Used in the Present Work," commonly but not invariably lists abbreviations of authors as well as works, and the full forms of the names, in Latin. Yet "Hor.," quite satisfactory as a Latin or English abbreviation, is faced by "Horace," as an understandable concession to English usage; and the titles, otherwise expanded only in Latin, include, again understandably, "*Carmina* or *Odes*." "Stob." faced by "Stobaeus" heads satisfactory Latin abbreviations in *Ecl.* and *Flor.*—yet these are oddly expanded as 'Εκλογαί and 'Ανθολόγιον. "Verg." is paired with "Virgil," and the abbreviated titles are *Aen.*, *Catal.*, *Ecl.*, and *G.*; facing these are *Aeneid*, *Catalepton*, *Eclogues*, and *Georgics*.

Yet the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* in this "Table" is a very ready source of abbreviations usually acceptable Latin-wise. There are some omissions, but these can be supplied. In THE CLASSICAL BULLETIN, over a period of some years, an effort has been made to use the Latin form, both in abbreviations and amplifications, of all Greek and Latin titles, though not of authors. Here is an obvious inconsistency, perhaps to be palliated by the "half a loaf is better than none" formula; here, too, is a usage of *Aen.* and *Aeneis*, of *Il.* and *Ilias*, likely to be distasteful to those who would plead that established English usage is too deep-rooted to allow a departure from *Aeneid* and *Iliad*.

However, any program of word reform almost automatically involves a certain amount of jarring. When, some years ago, the editors of American classical publications sought to agree on a uniform style sheet, with uniform abbreviations and uniform methods of citation, a notable but worthy amount of redoing resulted. Authors and editors now have a somewhat easier time. The proposal here advocated would extend that uniformity and seek to make it international. As has been suggested, languages not using the Latin alphabet would occasion difficulties. But even these could be met.

In brief, then, it is suggested that philologists and archaeologists agree on a universal employment of the Latin form of proper names in all publication—proper names of authors, titles of works, geographical places in the ancient world; with, of course, the hope that eventually all other proper names, as in the great range of classical mythology and the great range of classical literature itself (characters within epic, lyric, drama, and the like) would eventually appear internationally always in the ancient Latin form.

—W. C. K.

## Cicero's Sense of Humor

(Continued from page 53)

264 Cicero resumes his discussion of *narratio* as the first topic of humor *in re*, and refers to it as a very difficult matter (*res sane difficilis*), since it must describe, and so "present to the mind's eye, such things as bear the semblance of truth, this being the peculiar function of narrative, and such also as are a trifle unseemly, this being the peculiar function of joking."<sup>18</sup> The subject matter may be either truth or fabrication, and the *virtus* of this type is that the character, the manner of speaking, and all the facial expressions of the hero of one's tale are so presented that those incidents seem to one's audience to take place and be transacted concurrently with the description of them. The anecdote which Cicero twice cites as his example in the *De Oratore* (240, 264) is not nearly so typical as his recounting of the Vedius episode (*Att.* 6.1.25). The orator had the advantage that he could make his characterizations more real by the use of mimicry as well as narrative, but Cicero could draw word pictures with his pen. We see the ridiculous procession of Vedius coming to meet Cicero, the governor of Cilicia, with his imposing entourage, climaxed by a dog-headed baboon in a chariot and some wild asses. Vedius had left his baggage in Laodicea at the house of Vindullus, but Vindullus inconveniently chose that time to die. When inventory was taken, "Behold!—five portrait busts of married ladies, including the wife of your friend—*Brute*, indeed, to be intimate with such a fellow!"<sup>19</sup> Note the combination of *re* and *verbo*: anecdote and pun.

A continuous vein of dry humor is also characteristic of the letter in which he describes the senate meeting when Pompey foolishly neglected to pay tribute to Cicero, and Crassus took advantage of the situation (*Att.* 1.14.3): *Totum hunc locum quem ego varie meis orationibus, quarum tu Aristarchus es, soleo pingere* (metaphor), *de flamma, de ferro (nosti illas ληκύθους)*, *valde graviter pertexuit*, and so on. "He worked up with great effect that purple patch <Winstedt's phrase> which I so often use . . . to adorn my speeches, and of which you are so severe a critic: the passage about fire and sword—you know my paintpots. Well, he *really* laid it on thick. . . . And how I showed off for my new hearer Pompey! Then if ever my flow of rounded periods, my easy transitions, my antitheses, my constructive arguments stood me in good stead. I expect you heard me away over in Epirus."<sup>20</sup> Hyperbole, of course, aided by irony, and followed by insulting diminutives: *Concursabant barbatuli iuvenes, totus ille grex Catilinae, duce filiola Curionis* (*Att.* 1.13.5). The whole description of the scene in the senate is graphic and humorous.

The racy narrative and clever repartee of the letters that tell about the trial of Clodius are tempting to quote in full, but I shall limit myself to the high spots, and in each case point out the types of humor involved, for Cicero boasts of putting Clodius in his place both by the sustained humor of his speech and by repartee involving wordplay: *familiariter cum ipso cavillor ac iocor . . . non solum perpetua gravitate orationis, sed etiam hoc genere dictorum* (*Att.* 2.1.5). Of these he proposes to give a few samples, saying that all the rest lose point and grace without the excitement of the contest (*Att.* 1.16). "Up gets 'pretty boy' (see *paronomasia*), and throws it in my teeth that I was at Baiae (*obicit mihi me ad Baias fuisse*). It was a lie, but what did it matter?"—"You talk as though" (comparison) "you were accusing me of being in hiding!"—"What business has a man from Arpinum with hot baths?" (debasing). "Tell that to your patron, who wanted those baths of a man of Arpinum," for you know about the elder Curio, who bought the villa of Marius (an example of ironical inversion).—"How long," said he, "are we to put up with this king?"—"I wonder you mention the word 'rex', when Rex made no mention of you in his will." For indeed, he had gobbled up the inheritance (expected from Marcius Rex) before he found he was not to have it! (See *ambigua*).—"You bought a home," said he.—"You'd think he were saying: 'You bought the jurors'" (comparison and ironical inversion). "They didn't trust you," said he, "when you took an oath."—"Indeed, twenty-five jurors did trust me; the thirty-one didn't trust you, but took care to collect their payment in advance." Amid a burst of applause for my side, he retired.

Everyone is familiar with Cicero's picture of the leaders of the *optimates* who thought themselves in the seventh heaven if they had bearded mullets in their fishponds which came to eat from their hands (*Att.* 2.1.7). Less well known is *QFr.* 2.10.2-3, where, reporting in humorous vein on a thinly attended meeting of the senate, Cicero tells how Antiochus was laughed out of court: *Eum lusi iocose satis*: "As to his petition for a renewal of the honors he asked for to save himself the expense of dyeing his *praetexta* each year—I'm against it!" These are *subabsurda*.

## Deceived Expectations

(1) *Expectationibus enim decipiendis . . . risus moventur* (289). In 281-285 Cicero illustrates the theory of deceived expectations, first taking up *discrepantia*, statements that do not hang together. His first example is the simplest: "What does this gentleman lack—except cash and character?" (281). With this I would compare *Att.* 14.2.1, where Cicero considered the applause mistakenly given to L. Cassius, brother of the triumvir, a good joke, since this Cas-

sus was a Caesarian! In *Att.* 14.9.3 Cicero warns that war with the Parthians is threatening. Then he adds: "But Dolabella and Nicias will see to that!" The effect of this depends on the incongruity of the persons in question. Nicias was a grammarian. Thus this involves the unexpected, the *subabsurda*, and the debasing of personages—but in a good-humored way—all points to be recommended.

In 284 he continues: *Sed ex his omnibus nihil magis ridetur quam quod est "praeter expectationem," cuius innumerabilia sunt exempla.* And none wittier (*nihil facetius*, 285) than what Crassus said, when Silus had done serious damage to the case of Piso by testifying that he had heard something against him: "It may be," said Crassus, "that the person whose remark you say you heard was speaking in anger." Silus nodded assent. "It is also possible that you misunderstood him." To this also Silus nodded very emphatic assent, so putting himself into Crassus' hands. "It is also possible," Crassus continued, "that what you say you heard, you never really heard at all." *Hoc ita praeter expectationem accidit ut testem omnium risus obrueret.*"

Two examples of this type of incongruity are *Att.* 13.35.1, where Cicero exclaims over Caesar's architect, employed to enlarge the city he had never even seen, two years before. This would not be very humorous were it not combined with a dig at Caesar, who was getting too big for his toga!: *O rem indignam! Gentilis tuus urbem auget quam hoc biennio primum vidit et ei parum magna visa est quae etiam ipsum capere potuerit.*—And *Att.* 14.14.2, where Cicero laments the futility of Caesar's assassination: *Cui servire ipsi non potuimus eius libellis paremus.* "We, who refused to be his slaves, now bow down before his notebooks!" Both involve the debasing of Caesar's personality, which brings us to Cicero's next *genus in re*.

### Jests at Expense of Others

(2) *Naturis aliorum irridendis* (289).<sup>21</sup> Quintilian says that there are three things out of which we may seek to raise a laugh: others, ourselves, or things intermediate.<sup>22</sup> Since most of the jesting in the letters is done at the expense of personalities, I shall give but one example here, and refer the reader to other topics where such jests are quoted. This accords with Cicero's recommendation that verbal humor should be combined with some other type if it is to provoke laughter. For instance, jokes on Caesar discussed under *ambigua* could be included here. For Pompey, see *ambigua* and *subabsurda*; Brutus, *ambigua* and *narratio*; Clodius, *narratio*; Metellus, L. Caesar, and Appius, metaphor; Dolabella, *subabsurda*; and Afranius, Apollonius, and Clodius, assumed simplicity.

Besides being the subject of the famous double wordplay of *Att.* 1.13.2 (see *paronomasia*), the con-

sul of 61 B.C., M. Pupius Piso, is described in Cicero's next letter to Atticus (1.14.6) as having only one redeeming vice, his laziness!: *Ille alter uno vitio minus vitiosus quod iners, quod somni plenus, . . . quod ἀργαλιότητος* (*discrepantia* and *praeter expectationem*). It is amusing to contrast with this characterization the superlatives Cicero uses in his official capacity as advocate: *homini nobilissimo, innocentissimo, eloquentissimo, M. Pisoni* (*Planc.* 12).

### Dissembling or Irony

(3) *Dissimulatio*: dissembling or irony (289, 269-280). *Urbana etiam "dissimulatio" est . . . cum toto genere orationis severe ludas, cum aliter sentias ac loquere.* In his *Annales* Fannius pointed to Aemilianus as outstanding in this, and called him by the Greek term εἰρων, but in Cicero's opinion Socrates far surpassed all others for accomplished wit in this strain of irony or assumed simplicity: *in hac ironia dissimulationeque longe lepore et humanitate omnibus praestitisse.* He then points out that this and all else he has to say about humor is applicable to polite conversation as well as to public speaking: *Et . . . omnia haec quae a me de facili disputantur non maiora forensium actionum quam omnium sermonum condimenta sunt. . . . Sic profecto res se habet nullum ut sit vitae tempus in quo non deceat leporem humanitatemque versari* (269-271). The four topics discussed in the following paragraphs (272-280) can be treated as subheadings of *dissimulatio*.

(3A) *Assimilation-towards-the-better* (which terminology I have borrowed from the *Tractatus Coislinianus*): *Est huic finitimum dissimulatio "cum honesto verbo vitiosa res appellatur"*—"When something disgraceful is called by an honorable epithet" (272). Examples cited are when Africanus as censor demoted a centurion with the words: "I am no lover of the overcautious," and Fabius' retort about the capture of Tarentum, well known from the *De Senectute*.<sup>23</sup> When Salinator tried to claim a share of the credit, he answered: "To be sure, for I could never have recaptured it, unless you had lost it."

If the definition is taken literally, *Att.* 6.1.26, where Cicero refers to the murder of Clodius as the Battle of Leuctra, is a perfect example.

(3B) *Illa subabsurda* (274): *Sunt etiam illa subabsurda, sed eo ipso nomine saepe ridicula, non solum mimis perapposita, sed etiam quodammodo nobis: "Homo fatuus, postquam rem habere coepit, est emortuus."* The examples in the letters are cleverer:—*Att.* 7.8.3: "Shall Dolabella change his name to inherit?" "Wait till we see how much the legacy amounts to!"—*Att.* 5.21.13: "What a wide difference this implies you will certainly be able to reckon, if I know your fingers."—*Att.* 6.1.3: "The king has some rich friends, but they stick to their own, as energeti-

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cally as you or I!"—*Att.* 16.3.1, where Cicero pleads with Atticus to give a decent dinner, "or they will vent on my treatise their resentment against you."—*Att.* 7.17.1 tells Atticus he may stay in Rome, since he is in no wise bound to be the friend of Pompey, who has depreciated real estate values by abandoning Rome.—*Att.* 5.4.4, on Cicero's stinginess with paper.

(3C) *Assumed simplicity* (275-277). *Ex quo genere est etiam "non videri intellegere quod intellegas."* This seems to be a rich vein, since four notable instances are cited, including the anecdote, too well known to bear repeating, about the call that Ennius paid upon Scipio Nasica.

In *Att.* 7.2.4, Cicero teased Atticus about the pleasure he was taking in his little daughter, pretending that it had philosophical significance: that Atticus was now convinced as to the natural instinct for procreation of the Peripatetics and the Academics. But better known are three that combine assumed simplicity with the debasing of personality. In *Att.* 1.19.4: L. Afranius, raised by Pompey to the consulship, is described as such a nonentity that he does not know what he has bought: *nihil ita est ut plane quid emerit nesciat.*—*Att.* 2.7.2: regarding Clodius and his continued efforts to transfer to the plebeian class, Cicero quipped: "Don't the kings of Armenia return the visit of a patrician?"—*Att.* 4.7.1 concerned Apollonius: "A Greek and gone bankrupt: thinks he may do what the Roman knights do!"

(3D) *Hinted ridicule* (278-280). *Salsa sunt etiam "quae habent suspicionem ridiculi absconditam," quo in genere est Siculi illud, cui cum familiaris quidam quereretur quod diceret uxorem suam suspendisse se de ficu, "amabo te," inquit, "da mihi ex ista arbore quos seram surculos."*—Cicero cites several good examples of this type: when Catulus was asked by one who was a poor speaker whether he thought that his concluding remarks had aroused the pity of the audience, "Oh yes," he answered, "for I can't imagine anyone so hard-hearted as not to have pitied your performance."—To a man who jostled him with a box and then shouted "Look out!" Cato answered: "Oh, are you carrying something else?"—Or when the Sicilian, to whom the praetor was assigning as counsel a man of high birth, but rather stupid, begged: "Please, Sir Praetor, assign that gentleman as counsel to my opponent, and then I will not ask you to assign any counsel to me."

### *Jests on One's Self*

My final point I shall borrow from Quintilian: his *risus ex nobis*.<sup>24</sup> To enjoy a laugh, even if it is on one's self, is the essence of what we call a sense of humor. Though Cicero did not explain this, he must have sensed it, and he exemplified it in the letters to Atticus and Quintus. To Cicero nothing was sacred, not even that famous consulship, though in his article on "Cicero's Conceit" Professor Walter Allen makes

a good case for a certain amount of serious boasting on this subject.<sup>25</sup>

Concerning his literary merits Cicero could also enjoy a laugh at his own expense. Allen cites his comment that no poet or orator ever recognized superior talent in another (*Att.* 14.23.3): *Nemo umquam neque poeta neque orator fuit qui quemquam meliorem quam se arbitraretur*, and with it I would associate *Att.* 1.20.6, in which he tells Atticus that he has sent him his own account of his consulship, written in Greek, "which as a Greek you'll envy me. If others write on that subject, I'll send them to you, but somehow or other, when they've read mine, the others are in no hurry." In *QFr.* 2.15.5 Cicero asks his brother what Caesar thinks of his verses—is it the subject matter or the style he doesn't like? "You needn't be afraid—I'll not admire myself a whit the less." In *Fam.* 4.4.1 he plays with Sulpicius Rufus' compliment on his "rich store of language": *Et ego ipse, quem tu, per iocum (sic enim accipio) "divitias orationis" habere dicis*, which he modestly pretends to think was a joke, while in *Fam.* 9.21 . . . Paetus made use of the mock-heroic word *fulmina*, when he called himself mad to imitate the thunderbolts of Cicero's eloquence.

On his military prowess, the best known letter is the one in which he announced to Atticus his victory over the Pindenissetae: "Who the devil are they, you say? Well, what am I to do? Can I turn Cilicia into an Aetolia or a Macedonia?" His troops hailed Cicero *imperator*, and he pitched camp at the very spot that Alexander occupied against Darius at Issus, which provoked the delightful comparison: "He was an *imperator* not a little superior to you or me" (*Att.* 5.20.1-3). Another time, Paetus had apparently teased Cicero on his military exploits. He answered in kind: "I see you've become an authority, and so I intend to obey your instructions, and keep a little ship or two on the seacoast. They say no better equipment can be found to oppose the Parthian cavalry!" (*Fam.* 9.25.1).

In discussing his integrity as a provincial governor Cicero told Atticus (*Att.* 5.21.6-7): "I'm not a nuisance to the states in other respects either, though I may be to you, by tooting my own trumpet." In the troubled times just before the outbreak of the Civil War he wrote beseechingly (*Att.* 7.1.4): "What shall I say when asked my opinion on politics? 'Wait till I ask Atticus?'" And in *Att.* 1.16.15 he concluded that since he had no hope of poems from Thyillus and Archias he would be content with the epigram Atticus accorded his statue in Atticus' Amaltheum.

All jokes have a way of gravitating towards great names. Cicero reproached Volumnius for not defending his reputation against the poor ones—even the frigid ones that Sestius might have made (*Fam.* 7.32.1: *in his etiam Sestiana*). A far busier man, Julius Caesar, did just this. When Paetus advised

him to hold his tongue and save his neck, Cicero said that it was no use—even if he were willing to renounce his reputation as a wit Caesar was too sharp for him: *Sed tamen ipse Caesar habet peracres iudicium*, and just as your cousin Servius could have said: *hic versus Plauti non est, hic est*, “so I hear that Caesar, now that he has completed his collection of my jokes” (*apothegmata* is the word used, which Tyrrell translates with the Latin *dicta*) “is able to throw out any that isn’t genuine” (*Fam.* 9.16.3 and 4). Trebonius made such a collection (*Fam.* 15.21.2-3). Cassius said that he enjoyed writing to Cicero because he seemed to be talking and joking with him face to face (*Fam.* 15.19.1), and Asinius Pollio could not get enough of his company for the same reason (*Fam.* 10.31.6). Thus we see that Cicero’s wit was appreciated by his contemporaries.

### Quintilian Misunderstood

Perhaps the criticism that has been most damaging to his reputation as a wit is the wish expressed by Quintilian that fewer of his jokes had been preserved and the quality of these had been higher. But this is because it is sometimes taken out of its context. Quintilian’s criticism refers only to the collection of Cicero’s jests published in three books “by Tiro or someone else” (*Inst.* 6.3.5). He had already accorded Cicero the highest praise for *urbanitas* in his daily speech as well as in the conduct of trials: *mira quaedam in eo videtur fuisse urbanitas. Nam et in sermone cotidiano multa et in altercationibus et interrogandis testibus plura quam quisquam dixit facete* (*Inst.* 6.3.4).

There is no doubt about the authenticity of the jokes in the letters of Cicero; and as I read through them my reaction was one of surprise at the small number of jokes relative to the size of his correspondence, and their familiarity. This speaks well for the vividness of those generally read, since they make so strong an impression. By applying to the letter Cicero’s classification of types of humor which he defined and illustrated in the *De Oratore* I believe I have shown that in Cicero’s case theory and practice coincided.

But to quote the wise words that Cicero puts into the mouth of Julius Caesar Strabo in the *De Oratore* (217): *Ego vero . . . omni de re facetius puto posse ab homine non inurbano, quam de ipsis facietis disputari*. And so I hope that this attempt to analyze and classify has not detracted from the reader’s enjoyment of the illustrations.

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### NOTES

1 In his book *The Nature of Roman Comedy* (Princeton 1952) 305-314, Prof. George Duckworth conveniently summarizes “the more significant opinions of a few outstanding writers. . . . Both Cicero and Quintilian have an agnostic

attitude towards laughter. . . . The two Romans thus anticipate the sceptical tendencies of many modern writers, such as Hume, Dugas, Croce, and others.” In an article on “Cicero as a Wit” in *CJ* 3 (1957) 5, Prof. F. W. Kelsey said that the passage in the *De Oratore* (2.54-71) and Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.3, contained the best treatment found in ancient writers on rhetoric. 2 Mary A. Grant, *The Ancient Rhetorical Theories of the Laughable* (Madison 1924) 108-118, works this out in detail. 3 Citations of numbers in parentheses refer to paragraph numbers in Book 2 of the *De Oratore*. I have used the Loeb edition, with English translation by E. W. Sutton completed by H. Rackham. 4 Lane Cooper, *An Aristotelian Theory of Comedy* (New York 1922) 225. 5 Duckworth, op. cit. (*supra*, n. 1) ch. 12. 6 Eugene McCartney, “Puns and Plays on Proper Names,” *CJ* 14 (1919) 343-358. 7 Citations from Cicero’s letters are from the Oxford text, but I have also made use of Tyrrell and Purser, *The Correspondence of Cicero* (Dublin and London 1897-1914) I-VII, the Loeb, and the Bohn editions with, I hope, adequate acknowledgement to Messrs. Winstedt (Loeb) and Shuckburgh (Bohn) for their amusing translations. 8 Tyrrell and Purser, op. cit. (*supra*, n. 7) V 84, n. 3. 9 Ibid. IV 477, n. 10. Ibid. I 198, n. 11. Other nameplays are the nickname given to Pompey: “Samp-siceramus” (*Att.* 2.14.1; 16.2; 17.1 and 2; 22.3; 23.2). Philip-pus, stepfather of Octavian, was referred to as “the son of Amyntas,” as bearing the name of the famous king of Macedon (*Att.* 12.9); and in *Att.* 12.8, when Cicero wants to know whether Caesar will appoint the magistrates in Spain or allow the elections at Rome to take place, he asks whether he is thinking of going to the field of fennel (the campus Fencularis, near Tarraco), or the field of Mars. 12 Evelyn S. Shuckburgh, *The Letters of Cicero* (London 1908) II 392, n. 13. Op. cit. (*supra*, n. 7) V 279, n. 14. Ibid. IV 28 and 29 n. 15. If this could refer to the hill called Velia in the city of Rome, might there have been a second play on the names of the two hills in Rome? 15 Ibid. V 186, n. 16. Aurel. Vict. *De Vir.* III. 57.2 17 Tyrrell and Purser, op. cit. (*supra*, n. 7) II 126-127, n.; Shuckburgh, op. cit. (*supra*, n. 12) I 268, n. 18. Sutton’s translation. 19 Shuckburgh’s translation, op. cit. (*supra*, n. 12). 20 With this may be compared *Fam.* 2.10.2, wherein Cicero indicated to Caelius only part of what the people of Cilicia said about his consulship: “*Hicne est ille, qui urbem? quem senatus?*” *nosti cetera*. 21 This corresponds to the heading “debasing of personages” of the *Tractatus Coislinianus*, and includes *similitudo turpioris*, Cicero’s third point in discussing the *genera* in 289. 22 *Inst.* 6.3.23. 23 Ch. 4: Cicero confused Salinator with his relative M. Livius Macatus (Livy 27.34.7). 24 See above, note 22. 25 TAPA 85 (1954) 129-136.

### Breviora

#### Re-Rejoinder to Father Costelloe

To the Editor:

In replying to Father Costelloe’s January rejoinder to my observations on his review of Christine Mohrmann’s *Liturgical Latin*, I find myself at a disadvantage. Since he has manifestly not been able to follow the pertinent literature on the subject of the vernacular—or else has followed it with a considerable bias—he fosters the notion that, until Miss Mohrmann’s book appeared, there has been no rational discussion about the problem. This idea is so facetious that it is difficult to believe Father Costelloe is serious in expressing it.

Furthermore, since in his review he placed so much stress on Latin as a “sacral language,” I pointed out that English has already been excellently adapted to the purposes of a “sacral language.” Father Costelloe chooses to ignore this important argument completely.

Finally, owing to a misinterpretation of one of my statements, he hints that “intelligibility and precision” in language are dangerous; who knows but what they will lead to heresy! Such a fear completely overlooks the fact that Christ came as “a light which shall give revelation to the nations.” Is this light to be covered by a bushel? Again, it is the very nature of man’s intellect to be unsatisfied until it understands the object proposed to it. Hence the need for intelligible language. Since Christ celebrated the first Mass in Aramaic, since Saint Paul’s Corinthians by the year 55 A.D. were celebrating it in Greek, and since the Romans a couple of centuries later celebrated it in Latin—all of them for the simple reason that they wanted to make the Eucharistic action intelligible—it is an unwarranted conclusion to suggest that the use of other languages today is going to precipitate a new rash of heresies.

Saint Louis University

Francis Joseph Guentner, S.J.

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## Book Review

Gerald F. Else, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument*. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1957. Pp. xvi, 670. \$11.00.

Any complete commentary on the *Poetica* would have a beginning, a middle, and an end, just like a tragic plot. The beginning would consist of a new critical edition of the text, the middle would explain the difficulties contained in it and give a close analysis of its contents, and the end would give a dogmatic exposition of Aristotle's theory of tragedy. But anyone who would cut out such a program for himself would commit himself to a lifetime project. As it is, Professor Else has spent nearly twenty years in preparing the major portion of the middle of our ideal commentary, a close analysis of the argument, or theme, of the *Poetica*. Though he is presently engaged in recollating the Greek manuscripts in preparation for a new edition of the text, its history is such that it is not at all certain that a definitive text can ever be established. Probably conjectures and alternative choices will always have to be made, and, as a consequence, "there may be advantages in a study of the argument which is kept relatively independent of textual questions *per se*" (p. x). As for the end of the commentary, a systematic exposition of Aristotle's doctrine, this will be possible only after the argument has been thoroughly studied and new interpretations arising from this study have been "argued and debated separately, in their own right" (p. xi).

Mr. Else is convinced that "in its main lines the *Poetica* is a single, coherent piece of argument" (p. vii), and his present editing of the text is based upon this premise. Phrases, sentences, or clauses that do not seem to pertain directly to the argument are bracketed in fourteen different instances as being later additions to the original, and fifty-eight interpolations by some author other than Aristotle are also indicated. The validity of this procedure will undoubtedly be challenged in a number of instances. From my own little experience, it seems to me that subsequent emendations tend to smooth out irregularities rather than to increase them.

Throughout his careful study of the argument, Mr. Else challenges a good many assumptions and traditional interpretations of earlier commentators. Probably the most startling of these is his contention that "the catharsis is not a change or end-product in the spectator's soul, or in the fear and pity (i.e., the dispositions to them) in his soul, but a process carried forward in the emotional material of the play by its structural elements, above all by the recognition" (p. 439). In other words, "the purification, that is, the proof of the purity of the hero's motive in performing an otherwise 'unclean' act, is presented to him, and his conscience accepts and certifies it to his emotions, issues a license, so to speak, which says: 'You may pity this man, for he is like us, a good man rather than a bad, and he is καθαρός, free of pollution'" (p. 438). Such an interpretation, if it is eventually accepted, will certainly modify many claims made for tragedy and the fine arts in general. Mr. Else admits that there are difficulties with his hypothesis, but not so great as those that attend the traditional view. He notes, for example, that Aristotle in his *Politica* promises to take up the meaning of catharsis in the *Poetica*; but it would have helped the reader to form his own judgment as to the meaning of the word if Mr. Else had also included Aristotle's description of the effect of music on those who have fallen into a state of religious frenzy—"they are restored as though they had found healing and purification" (καθιστάμενους ὥστε ἰατρίας τυχόντας καὶ καθάρσεως—*Pol.* 1342a10). The therapeutic effect of music is not, of course, the same as the aesthetic experience of witnessing the performance of a tragedy, but it is at least analogous.

One of the most striking things I noticed in this commentary are a few sentences devoted to the place of the gods in Aristotle's interpretation of Greek tragedy: "Aristotle's 'practical' world, which is also his poetical world, is the world as we know it from day to day. . . . God or Fate do not break into the charmed circle. The ultimate never confronts us in the *Poetics*, any more than it does in the *Ethics* or the *Politics*—except in the form of Chance or the marvelous" (p. 306). "Plato's polemic against the depictions of the gods in Homer and the other poets makes it clear that he regarded them at least as serious attempts to portray the divine nature. In other words he recognized that Greek poetry was a representation of men and gods. One half of this world has disappeared from Aristotle's field of view. . . . The gods are gone, except as a curtain-raiser, and there is nothing to replace them except an Aristotelian Prime Mover sitting forever beyond the heavens" (474-475). But if God is so remote for Aristotle in his *Poetica* as He seems to be in his *Metaphysica*,

I am afraid that Mr. Else's interpretation of the meaning of catharsis is to be in for some serious trouble. The most tragic acts that must be "purified" are precisely those to which "the immemorial taboo" and "superstitious fears" were "most firmly attached" (p. 425). The purification consists in the ultimate recognition of an "otherwise 'unclean act'" being "free of pollution" (p. 438). "The catharsis, that is, the purification of the tragic act by the demonstration that its motive was not *μῦθος*, is accomplished by the whole structure of the drama, but above all by the recognition" (p. 439). Now these references to taboos, superstitious fears, 'unclean' acts, and freedom from pollutions can have significance only in a definitely religious context. On the other hand, in the three places where Aristotle actually does use the word *μῦθος*, it never has its primary meaning of "defiled with blood," "ritually impure," but only "shocking," or "morally revolting" (1452b36, 1453b39, 1454a4).

The answer to the difficulty may be not so much that the gods have "disappeared," but that Aristotle simply prescind from their activity, which may or may not be an essential element in the traditional story (cf. 1454b6, 1460b37). He was primarily interested in seeing whether a character's responses to a tragic situation were consistent with what was expected of him. But the matter deserves further consideration. As all readers of Aristotle soon discover, his attitude toward God is somewhat equivocal. Because he did not push his metaphysical principles to the point of creation, God in his philosophy is always and necessarily aloof from the world. But as a practical man he not infrequently seems to have surmounted his philosophical difficulties. In the last book of the *Ethica Nicomachea*, for example, he observes: "If, as is generally believed, the gods exercise some superintendence over human affairs, then it will be reasonable to suppose that they take pleasure in that part of man which is best and most akin to themselves, namely the intellect, and that they recompense with their favours those men who esteem and honour this most, because these care for the things dear to themselves, and act rightly and nobly" (1179a25-29—Rackham).

These are but two of the many problems that Mr. Else has courageously tackled in his monumental work. It is to be hoped that the discussion which his suggestions are bound to

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provoke will lead to the greatly desired doctrinal interpretation of Aristotle's theory of literary criticism. Probably few will have the time or patience to read this volume through, but all will find it a help in solving particular problems in the *Poetica*. As for anyone who can manage to read it from cover to cover without much skipping, I can only paraphrase a line from Cicero: *Virum te putabo si Elsei Poetica Aristotelis perlegeris, hominem non putabo* (QFr. 2.9).

M. Joseph Costelloe, S.J.

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